



Title: Undressing truth: applications and negations of nudity on the stage and in the audience

Name: Carly Fielding

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UNDRESSING TRUTH:
APPLICATIONS AND NEGATIONS OF NUDITY ON THE STAGE AND IN THE
AUDIENCE

Carly Fielding

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Abstract

The aim of this project is to test contemporary performance making's trends and views in relation to the moral values imposed on them by society. As such, it looks at shock values applied to nudity within theatre and dance in the UK.

The proposed argument of this work focuses on and questions whether the reaction of current British audiences to nudity still stem from tenets and biases rooted in Victorian morals. As suggested above, the research will explore the use of nudity within theatre and dance, applying theories of sexuality and social politics.

To achieve the proposed aims, the thesis will briefly explore the work of two current practitioners who are investigating similar themes. These are Javier De Frutos and Dave St Pierre. They were chosen because of their use of shock tactics in performance. In line with the thinking that informs their practices, this work both proposes and relies on the creation of a test bed which, it is hoped, will help take the pulse of contemporary performance making in the UK. It will also check where it is that audiences and practitioners are standing in terms of social constraints regarding nudity. As such this is an experiment; and although there are many performances that use nudity for shock value, none of them appear to have published findings regarding the causal effect of nudity on shock.

The work of Dave St Pierre and Javier De Frutos will be used to highlight the use of shock within performance making. The work of Sigmund Freud and Michel Foucault will also be explored as theoretical grounding for the research. The main body of text will draw upon the practice as research as the primary source, with some references to the authors previous research regarding censorship of nudity in theatre (2012).

The formulation of the thesis will draw on the outcomes of the practice based

investigation, references to books, journals and interviews - discussed more in depth in the ensuing literature review and, most significantly, on data collected and collated from questionnaires audience members attending the especially devised performance were asked to respond to.

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Methodology

In terms of analysis there is no single method which can be applied to the performance. Therefore a number of methods must be explored in order to analyse *Undressing Truth* (2013). Patrice Pavis suggests in his book *Analyzing Performance* (2003) that it is a director's role to give form and meaning to the performance. The argument as to this method in relation to the performance, *Undressing Truth* (2013), is that as part of the process of making the performance it was always the director's intention to allow the audience the opportunity to give the piece form and meaning. As without the audience the director would not be able to determine if the performance reached its true potential; it would not be for the director to decide if the audience were shocked or not. Another aspect of Pavis' methods is regarding semiotics and the signified/signifier. Whilst this might apply to traditional methods of performance making, again with regard to *Undressing Truth* (2013), these cannot be applied as the related signs were never intended for their true meaning, i.e. the scales represent body image but they are never meant as a discussion point for the research. This was a technique employed by the director to give the dancers something to improvise with, and allow the dance piece to have some semblance of a story. This story embedded into the performance did not enhance the overall imagery of the performance and was open to interpretation. Some saw it as a representation of issues with body image and others saw it as a mirror of life.

Pavis also suggests two other methods of analysis. One is analysis as reportage, namely reporting on the performance as it happens; it would not be plausible to allow the audience to make notes whilst the performance was happening as they would miss crucial details of the piece. This does however open up the discussion for analysis as reconstruction which allows time for understanding of the creators'

intentions and impact upon audience; in essence it would create the theoretical framework. As the creator, director and performer it was always the intention to impact the audience by presenting them with shocking imagery but whether or not that happened would not be clear until after the performance. It was impossible to gauge reactions during the show as at one point the director was performer and spectator at once. This also disproves Schechner's methods of analysis with his four players as at one point the director was all in one. It was impossible to interact as all four as at one point the saucer was the producer, performer, and partaker.

Schechner's restoration of behaviour suggests that everything can be considered or analysed from a performance perspective, but not everything is intended as a performance: "not everything is meant to be a performance, but everything, from performing arts to politics and economics, can be studied as performance" (Schechner, R 2006. P38). Therefore in terms of analysis it is important to understand the systems in place but also use a combination in order to define the current performance. For this research the application of Schechner's restoration behaviour and Kershaw's performance as research analysis will be used in order to attempt to justify the arguments raised by the performance. The idea Schechner formed about the creation of performance in everyday activities is something that greatly influenced the performance. The idea of taking an everyday naked action such as showering or changing clothing and analysing it from a performative perspective. This alters the meaning of the word naked and turns it into a narrative, by this it is argued that the term naked narrative becomes a performance in itself, creating the development of the term naked.

Both Schechner and Pavis have been considered as they both explore conventions of theatre; Pavis in relation to the western world and Schechner to the eastern world.

Pavis explores this in his book *Analyzing Performance* and Schechner explores this in his book *Performance Studies*, in particular his exploration of ritual in performance and the act of participating.

Antonin Artaud is someone that keeps appearing when looking at performance analysis; this is something which the performance can relate to, Artaud's methods of performance making apply to the methods of *Undressing Truth* (2013). For example it was always Artaud's intention to put the spectator at the heart of the performance. This links directly with the current performance as the spectators in attendance became the performers, throwing them out of their safe audience space and into a much more volatile unexpected space.

The true theatre has its shadows too, and, of all languages and all arts,
the theatre is the only one left whose shadows have shattered limitations.
From the Beginning one might say its shadows did not tolerate limitations

Artaud, A (1958 p.12)

The aim of the performance was to create a contemporary platform in which to explore the aims of the research project. By composing a performance that combined dance and theatre it was able to test the boundaries of each discipline and see if there was a correlation between shock in theatre and shock in dance. The hypothesis was that the audience would be more shocked by the theatre aspect of the performance than the dance. This is because nudity in dance is readily accepted as a medium of expression. "In the Anglo-Saxon world, however, stage nudity was never permissible only if it was inert" (Banham, M 1995. P.803). This is not to say that nudity in dance does not cause outrage; there have been many incidents in which nudity in dance has caused outrage within society. For example; Pina Bausch's revival performance of *rite of spring* (1975) in Wuppertal Germany, which the

females danced naked, this is now considered the most memorable version of this production. But if we compare this to the outrage caused by nudity in theatre it is by far more common. From previous research into the windmill theatre and Performance Art of the 60's and 70's it is clear to see that theatre has had more of an impact when using nudity as a form of expression, with the constant censorship of their performances dictating the amount or the type of nudity they are allowed to portray. By combining the two disciplines it has given more scope for experimentation and also a larger research field and additional potential for a more suited outcome.

Theoretical context

As explored by Foucault in the first volume of his trilogy *The History of Sexuality* (1990), the Victorians brought about a sexual overhaul, changing the way in which British society view and discuss sexuality. Foucault starts with the shift between Renaissance's rational towards sexuality and the Victorian model. He describes the Victorianisms as the attitudes given to art and culture during the Victorian era. This includes their attitudes to sexuality and what the word implied during the Victorian period. The great shift in attitudes towards sexuality has impacted contemporary culture. The concept that nudity is something that we should find shocking harks back to this bygone era.

Up until the 19th century the term sexuality did not exist, this was constructed by the Victorians as a term used within discourse regarding issues of a sexual nature i.e. coitus and nudity. Aside from the term being used as a mechanism to allow discourse on the subject of sex and sexual being, the term opened a gateway for the educated to conduct discussions on the subject and explore its use within society. This led to a certain amount of control when dealing with the topic. As suggested by Foucault, outwardly the Victorians insisted the appearance of prudes but inwardly they were obsessed with the idea of sex and its ideals.

For a long time, the story goes we supported a Victorian regime, and we continue to be dominated by it even today. Thus the image of the imperial prude is emblazoned on our restrained, mute and hypocritical sexuality.

Foucault, M (1990 p3)

This is a notion that has plagued the British ever since. Outwardly the British are seen as a prudish nation with Victorian morals with regards to sex. As stated by

Laura Cenicola & Mareike Aumann “Victorian morality can be described as a set of values that supported sexual repression this means that during this era the Victorians repressed sexual desires and discourse.” This is still having an effect on today's society as proved by both statements and the questionnaires. In addition and in line with Foucault's theories. These bear in mind the epistomies that Foucault proposes in all his work. *The History of Society* in particular encompasses both the 19th century and the Victorian era as such and the 20th and 21st century too. Indeed the reference to Foucault that underlined his work were prompted by his view of history not as segmented periods within set dates but as evolving epistomies. A comparison between the questionnaires and the quotations referencing Victorian morals in the following passages show that Foucault's epistomie remains to date an acceptable notion and one that can be enscribed in and worked upon within the context of this research.

Inwardly we are obsessed with the idea of sex, but when faced with the prospect of sex or sexual implications it becomes an embarrassing topic - i.e. when presented with a naked body in close proximity. A statement taken directly from the questionnaires distributed to the audience suggests that the audience were interested by nudity, but social discourse meant they could not look. “I wanted to turn around and look behind but politeness prevented me” (Anonymous, 2013, *Undressing Truth Questionnaire 7, Appendix B*) By this it can be argued that in reality we are not shying away from just the thought of nudity being alive and real, but we are making a stand with regards to accepting our sexuality as that moment dictates to us. As mentioned above by not accepting the sexual concepts of the epoch you fail to be defined or ostracised. Foucault also raises the issue of controlling society by means of discourse. He highlights the idea of censorship and

how absurd it is to censor something, as this will inevitably cause more discussions around the subject, with statements such as “Censorship is doomed to failure” (Foucault, M. in Dunphy, R. 2000, p.19). There is no doubt that during the Victorian era censorship became a way to exert more power over the masses; sex became something regulated by law. Queen Victoria imposed strict rules and regulations that stipulated what was expected of the upper classes, these were: to avoid sexual scandal it was imperative to act and behave in a certain way. The social separation resulted in a sense of propriety of the upper classes in which a high level of modesty was expected of ladies and gentlemen; nudity was considered below their social class. (Cenicola & Aumann)

From books such as *The Habits of Good Society a Handbook of Etiquette for Ladies and Gentlemen* published by James Hogg and Sons in 1859, it is possible to gather evidence to support the claim that we have adopted some of these Victorian morals and expectations. Such as the company we keep and how we judge others, on page 34 the author explains that bad society can be explained into three classes, Low, being those without morals or manners, Vulgar, being those without manners and finally, dangerous for society, being those without morals. The reason this is classed as the worst is because a gentleman can masquerade as a gentleman with good manners and breeding but without morals they cease to be a gentleman and have the possibility to influence whole societies. The same can be applied to our contemporary society, although today's society are less likely to distinguish them by class, it is possible to argue that the reason the audience member's found this performance discomforting is because it went against the expected standard of manners and decency. This book stood as a guide to help those in decent society conform to the expectations of them. There are chapters dedicated to conversation,

dress, expectations and how to ride in a carriage with a lady. This book also draws comparisons with the expectations of other cultures of the time, for example America and what is now considered Europe.

The idea of censorship is one that has been researched in depth by the author, the aim of which was to determine the effect censorship has had on the contemporary British stage. The influence stems from the idea that without censorship we would have a free artistic licence in which we could produce work of many different genres and themes, without the fear of being ostracised from the arts circle. The research suggested that due to this censorship of what we could and could not produce on stage we have stunted our artistic growth in comparison to other countries. The author's previous research into censorship (Fielding, C. BA Dissertation, 2012) found that society during the 60's was influenced by the censorship office. This office censored plays, playwrights, films and performances. This office was made up of middle to upper class gentlemen that did not necessarily understand the views of the working class people. This had an impact in what the nation were able to see on stage, creating a void in artistic licence. "If you wanted to keep control of society, then you needed to control the medium of theatre" (Shellard, D. 2004, p.x) this quote explains the idea of censorship being the way to control society and ensure that they stay in line with what the current government expects. This links directly into Foucault's argument that by censoring discourse you are extorting more power. When the censorship office was disbanded in 68' it is clear to see an explosion of artistic prowess. This was the 'hair generation': the experimenters with the body and its impact upon theatre and audiences. The idea of a sexual revolution was amongst us and yet, it could be argued that we are not actually feeling any benefit from it in contemporary performance making. If we look at Foucault, and apply his theories on

censorship to nudity it is clear to see that by censoring nudity the government created a need for discourse and experimentation. This creates a point for rebellion, which in part deconstructs the terms of the censor. This brings about another interesting point about rebellion and sexuality, in that by appearing nude the person creating the naked narrative is rebelling against what is perceived as society's norms. The previous research into censorship tried to explore the issue of shock values and nudity; its findings were inconclusive due to the lack of contemporary performances that explore the matter.

Foucault believed that people's identities became tied to their sexualities; these sexualities are dictated by a society that does not necessarily speak for everyone. In order to not be defined by their sexualities people began to repress them. Foucault suggests that during the Victorian period those in educated society were discussing sexuality under the pretense of exploration. He then goes on to suggest that it was the ruling class that adapted an outward image of prudery. Therefore it could be argued that the reason we are seen as prudes in contemporary society is because we have adopted the outward image of the Victorians, the expected image, and made it a reality. Another theory is that we are still portraying the outward image of a non-sexual nation, but inwardly we are still just as obsessed with the idea of sex as the Victorians were. It is still society's perception that sex is not an option of discussion therefore we are portraying the outward image successfully. In contemporary society as with the Victorian era it can also be argued that discourse is somewhat different to the act of sexuality: For example to talk about the topic is considered acceptable in certain societies or social groups but to experience the topic as a live action is considered a taboo. The right of oligarchic elite is more 'prudish', they dictate that nudity is not acceptable whilst the left of oligarchic elite is

more liberal suggesting no aversion to nudity. Inherently nudity is considered a sexualised image within society. The idea of one being unclothed suggests a certain state of moral decoding. To create an image of nudity that is not sexualised is a hard task to complete. The idea of being covered is one that suggests maintaining dignity. People invariably dislike being in a state of undress because they are not comfortable in their own skin. Society dictates that to maintain dignity one should be clothed as much as possible. It can therefore be argued that the ruling class that constructed the social norms surrounding decency, dress and modesty had an ulterior motive in protecting themselves or their partners from experiencing embarrassment. If we apply this theory to Freud's taboos as a cultural construct designed to stimulate fear within a community, it can be argued then that the construct of nudity and its rules and regulations were designed to control the nation. This then continued to display the outward image of British culture as a nation of prudes. By creating this fear/taboo it gives the same response to the censorship and invariably there will always be someone who wishes to challenge the rules. There is also the defending argument that in terms of intelligence amongst the proletariat at the time, nudity became a taboo. This was a learned behaviour, so it follows suit that it should continue as that is what is expected.

for decades now, we have found it difficult to speak on the subject without striking a different pose: we are conscious of defying established power, our tone of voice shows that we know we are being subversive, and we ardently conjure away the present appeal to the future, whose day will be hastened by the contributions we feel we are making.

Foucault, M. (1976, p. 6/7)

Foucault believes that there is no true history of sexuality; it is something that each culture and time period has constructed. This means that we are not necessarily building upon the current ideas of sexuality but adapting them or revolutionising them

altogether in order to suit the cultural/social needs of the epoch. This does not necessarily stand true; it could be argued that we can historicise the development of sexuality. Starting with the Victorian era and the introduction of the term sexuality, flowing through into the revolution of the 40's/50's with the invention of pinup and mediatisation. The sexual revolution of the 60's and 70's marked a substantial change in the way sexuality was viewed. "The sexual revolution of the sixties was an uprising rooted in a conviction that the erotic should be celebrated as a normal part of life and not repressed by family, industrialized sexual morality, religion and the state" (Iserman, M. 2012, p 138-140). The rebellion of the 60's and 70's was in response to their parents' Victorian values. Many things came out of this new wave, for example the social awareness of sexually transmitted diseases and free birth control. But what did not come out of this movement was a social acceptance of nudity. It still remains a taboo and something which should be frowned upon. The main protagonists within the rebellion of the 60's and 70's were the 'hippies', young people aged between 15 and 25, namely the people who rebelled against their traditions and values. The idea of materialistic needs was not core to 'hippie' culture; they created a new bourgeoisie society in which they adapted their own rules and regulations regarding sexuality. Foucault suggests this is something that happens in every culture. In effect the 'hippy' generation created their own micro culture with their own views on sexuality. These did not match the historicized views of the rest of society. This therefore has created a dip within the results gathered from the performance. The issues that arise from these practices, which do not match the sexual conventions defined by the revolution of the 60's, are that because these ideologies ingrained into contemporary society by our parents and grandparents viewpoints. These ultimately stem from the Victorianisms dictated by previous

generations. It becomes difficult to overcome these problematic conventions which are highlighted by needless censorship.

As raised in the previous research by the author into the effect of censorship on the stage in the UK, these morals and ethics are issues which are dictated to us by the media or the government. These are two representatives of contemporary society that 'speak' for the masses. The idea of nudity on stage becomes repulsive because the performance is not portraying the nicest human form as dictated by the media. The performance asks the audience to take a look at itself in the mirror and representing the actual social norm. Some of the audience members felt uncomfortable looking directly at the naked body; this can be confirmed by their responses through the questionnaires. Many said that they found it difficult to maintain eye contact with a naked person, although the unusualness of the situation made them want to look deeper at the body and make comparisons to themselves. As a nation the UK is so paranoid by the sight of their own bodies due to external influences such as the media that no one ever feels truly comfortable displaying it. This then leads to further paranoia and so the cycle begins. If in fact everyone was open about their body and spoke about their urges or genitalia then there would not be a stigma attached to the body, we would forgo all pre conceived perceptions of what the body should look like and start living with what the body does look like. These issues apply to both the male and female gender. A few of the responses from the audience were about the difference in body shape for men and women (see appendix B). As mentioned earlier it is not an everyday occurrence to stare at someone's penis that is not your partner's or a model, therefore you are bound to draw a comparison between yourself and the performer. This is a natural response.

This leads into a discussion regarding body image and perceptions. Although it is a natural response to compare your body to others, it is also apparent in society that some people find comfort in judging others. For example; one questionnaire was returned with derogatory comments regarding some of the performers' bodies. They suggested that they are not considered to be a satisfactory representation of the human form. The performance was never intended as a representation of a false image but a true representation of the diversity of the human shape. "There is nothing mysterious about the human body. It is the human attitude toward the human body that is mysterious and bewildering" (Carr-Gomm, P 2010 p41). This again counteracts the norms of performance by representing the body in an unexpected form that distorts the perceived image of expected body form. For example; the dancers on stage represented their own body fears.

The body, and the way we present it, are complex constructs. The post-performance discussion clearly made reference to the fact that clothes hide and/or morph what the real identity of a person is. We use our clothing as a statement or a veil to show an emotion or keep us warm. The difference is that when you are naked you lift the veil and expose the unexpected; this is what shocks people the most, the idea that underneath the secrecy of clothing there is a whole other person that is waiting to be explored. For the British as with the Victorian British this is only ever done in privacy and attaches a certain level of intimacy, hence when we are forced into a spectacle of the naked human body we find it unexpected and shocking, or in the audience's case expected and un-shocking. "Nudity is "Natural" but nature is, paradoxically, never enough. The natural state is, in fact, unnatural." (Barcan, R .2004, p 2) This suggests that we will never be truly happy with our natural state as long as this is considered unnatural.

These ideas of control are what started the performance research: the idea that nudity is controlled by our own desire to not be pigeon holed into a category by society. This desire to investigate such theories in relation to performance making led to researching two practitioners, both of whom experimented with nudity and shock values.

The first is Javier de Frutos. He was born in Caracas in 1964, into a strict catholic family. He has strong beliefs about discrimination, particularly in relation to homosexuality. Such beliefs have been a strong influence in his work; as a homosexual himself he translated into dance theatre the difficulties he has faced in society and created controversial performances. He established his own company, the Javier de Frutos Company, in 1994. De Frutos is known for the no-barriers and very niche 'in-your-face' use of nudity in his creations, which stem from his desire to stress the raw power and freedom such use of the human body entices. De Frutos has insisted in many interviews that he does not intend to create shocking performances. And yet, works such as *Eternal damnation to Sancho and Sanchez* (2009) - which focuses on orgiastic action involving a deformed pope - was highly criticised and deemed unacceptably outrageous by audiences and critics when first presented at the Sadler's Wells Theatre in London. The subsequent premiere in Spain, a Catholic country, interestingly caused little stir. (Barnett, L 2010) Such a discrepancy clearly indicates that UK morals make audiences less tolerant of certain types of performance, in line also with frozen conventional notions of what theatre ought to be like. The other practitioner the current research drew upon is Canadian born Dave St Pierre, who is known for combining dancers with actors in his works, and constantly creating works that are effectively combining diverse media and performance styles. St Pierre uses nudity as an expression of equality, the most

basic form with all its vulnerabilities. He 'forces' viewers to take a hard look at the body and what it is like by invading the personal sphere of each audience member. Such approach is central to what is, arguably, his most famous creation, namely *Un Peu de Tendresse Bordel de Merde!* (2011) in this performance the performers invade the audience, naked, thrusting their genitals into the audiences' personal space. His shock mechanisms have been related to the work of Antonin Artaud and his use of cruelty within theatre. St Pierre's breaking down of the 'fourth wall' generates shock and unease within the audience turning them from spectators into performers. Daniel Leveille, a Canadian born choreographer who founded his own company in 1981, is another practitioner who uses nudity within his choreography. It is clear to see how the use of nudity does not always result in generating shock images. Unlike De Frutos and St Pierre, Leveille's use of the naked form is only aimed at portraying the body in its most natural form and highlights the way it moves through a somewhat anatomical perspective. The comparison between his performances and those of the other two practitioners discussed above, thus reveals that nudity in itself is not shocking. It is the 'act of nudity', namely a manipulation of the same - whether it be theatrical, performative or else - that causes and generates shock. The act of nudity, therefore, implies an awareness of the state and a flaunting intention that break through a number of socially, culturally, politically and historically established barriers between the performance and the viewers and, most significantly, between the audience member as a spectator and the audience member as participator. Both Leveille's *Amour, Acide et Noix* (2001) and St Pierre's in *Un peu de Tendresse Bordel de Merde!* (2011) have naked dancers but each use their nakedness in different ways. Leveille's approach is less intrusive: the dancers never stray from their stage and the audience is invited to watch their movements. St

Pierre, on the other hand, leaves no choice to the audience. His naked dancers run amok the viewers, asking to be touched and tickled, placing some of the most intimate parts of their bodies in close proximity of the viewers' eyes and faces. In other words, the audience is forced to partake in the act of nudity, and to expose its own vulnerabilities. It is this act which makes St Pierre's choreography intentionally shocking. De Frutos has stated that 'shock is only a temporary state' (De Frutos, in Barnett, L. 2010, p.1); this implies that we will only be shocked by an image once. It was in the light of these considerations, as well as in the light of the examples provided by De Frutos and St Pierre, that the devised performance was formulated and designed.

Background history

The performance itself was designed solely to showcase social/cultural issues regarding nudity in theatre. The idea was to highlight the fact that people are shocked by the use of nudity within theatre. For example in the United Kingdom it is not illegal to appear naked in public as long as you can prove that you did not intend to cause offence;

In England and Wales, simply being naked is not in itself an offence, and it seems that in all these cases you could only be prosecuted if it could be proved that you had the intention to offend someone by your behaviour.

Carr-Gomm, P (2010, p.148)

This is a problematic rule as it is impossible to prove that you had no intention of causing offence when we know from history that people see nudity as an offensive image. Carr-Gomm (2010, p.36) later suggests that “the laws prohibiting nudity in Britain are arcane and the British attitude to nudity is very odd.” It was this particular statement that prompted critical reflections on what constitutes offence and what are offensive images. Indeed, at the core of the devices performance was not the intention to offend but to shock. Such an approach, in turn, highlighted a grey area within the research; namely the thin demarcation line that occurs between what is believed to be offensive and what causes shock, for it could be argued that the two are synonymous with each other.

The idea of shock is an interestingly elusive concept. The definition of shock, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary* edited by Stevenson (2002, p.646) is “a sudden upsetting or surprising event or experience”. From the questionnaires distributed at the performance it became apparent that the audience is unclear as to the definition of the term shock. When asked what their definition of shock was many

believed that it was a physically or mentally painful experience, one that they would not wish to repeat. Others assumed it was an unexpected event, thus aligning their thinking with the definition proposed by the *Oxford Dictionary*. Indeed, the elusiveness of the notion of shock and the way such notion remains vague in everyday jargon and thinking, potentially undermined the intended outcomes of the questionnaires. Luckily, such a threat was to be somewhat rectified and compensated by the oral discussion that followed the performance itself, and which was duly recorded for analytical purposes.

During the discussion after the performance the audience was given the chance to ask questions to the director and performers. This gave valuable insight for the research as there were many points raised at that moment that developed the argument and gave substantial evidence and grounding. The audience was supportive of the overall idea and understood the basic concept of the performance; many congratulated the performers on their bravery. This could be understood in many contexts, the first being that it is an act of defiance which requires some kind of inner strength to be able to complete the task of removing your clothes and standing in front of friends and strangers, and the other context is that as audience members they feel this is a task they would not be able to accomplish due to the social constraints applied to society. Freud as explained in *Totem and Taboo*, suggests that this is the nature of a taboo and that by participating in that social taboo, in this case being naked on stage, the participator is endangering the social construction and allowing those in the room witnessing the event to be a part of that taboo and therefore suffer the possibility of being ostracised from society. "The Violation of the taboo makes the offender himself a taboo" (Freud, S 1990, p.60). For example, during the discussion one of the audience members said that they felt uncomfortable

removing their cardigan through fear of those sitting near them interpreting that as part of the performance.

From the audience's responses it can be understood that many of them found the overall performance not shocking, even though each viewer did find that a particular moment in the event had caused a shock reaction. Interestingly, the moment they all referred, was the same -namely the forced and unexpected proximity with nudity.

The shock, therefore, stemmed from the unexpected situation, as the discussion brought to light the fact that almost everyone had expected the director to abide by socially established ethical behaviour, and duly inform beforehand of the particular use of nudity.

The discussion highlighted more interesting factors, as many commented on having to handle other people's clothing. Both of these are unexpected situations to find one in when presented through theatre contextualisation and the conventions and expectations that are applied to contemporary theatre. It can be argued that the discomfort stems from not only the unexpected but also the apparent change within the expected; for example, during traditional theatre performances the performance happens on stage away from the audience allowing them the opportunity to engage as much or as little into the contexts of the performance. By using the audience space, typically a safe space, as part of the show the audience is forced to engage with the performance which breaks the expectations of theatre making it unexpected. This, should, in theory evoke a sense of shock at the unexpected nature of the performance. Richard Schechner (2002, p.71) suggests that "the very act of entering the "sacred space" has an impact on participants. In such spaces special behavior is required" by breaking the rules evoked by the sacred theatre space it was possible to create an uneasy environment. That should in theory make the audience more

susceptible to shock. Statements such as “Audience unsure how to react, given the absence of conventional performance structure” (Anonymous, 2013, *Undressing Truth Questionnaire 3, Appendix B*), taken directly from the audience feedback, show how the ‘absence of conventional performance structure’ resulted in the audience’s ability to decipher meaning becoming confused. As stated by Simon Shepherd, “Audiences can learn to discover themselves in the new spatial order” (2006, p.100); presenting the audience with the unexpected gives them a chance to decipher new meanings.

Many of the audience members found the close up images of genitals rather disturbing as this again was unexpected; “I was prepared for nudity but it was off seeing the images of men and women with clothes on their top halves and naked on the bottom, reminds me of a child” (Anonymous, 2013, *Undressing Truth Questionnaire 4, appendix B*). Although the audience had expected nudity, the images that were presented depicted body parts and nude bodies that were different from the more ‘idealised’ and aesthetically pleasing images presented by the media. These images seemed to cause discomfort as this is possibly not what they had envisioned when considering nudity within theatre. The genitals seemed to have the most reaction as a shocking image, as this is the part of the body that is never usually on display; normally it is reserved within a British culture for intimate pleasure. By breaking the norm and showing a range of images on a large screen for the audience to see it created an air of taboo. As suggested by Freud the stigma of a taboo is far greater than the act of a taboo. By forcing the audience to look closely at genitals and areas of the body usually shown in private, the performance was branding the audience with the stigma of breaking an unwritten rule in society. In his

own words, at the core of such taboo is the “point by point transfer from one to the other” (Freud, S 2012 p.84).

the next question asked ‘at any point did you feel uncomfortable?’ many identified an exact point in the performance that they felt most uncomfortable. “Full nudity – I feel we are still very restricted to this in our everyday lives. Particularly genital nudity” (Anonymous, 2013 *Undressing Truth Questionnaire 5, Appendix B*). The statement suggests that the audience found the nude aspect of the performance startling.

Generally the close proximity of the naked performers to the audience member was the biggest hurdle to overcome, together with the thought of having to place a sticker onto a nude stranger. The idea of touching a stranger is worse than the idea of touching someone familiar. The preliminary research suggested the opposite; it was believed that the idea of being in close proximity to someone that is known in a state of undress would be unnerving. This is what Foucault suggests within his trilogy, through his reading of Victorianisms, namely that even though it was known that people had genitals, their existence was socially obliterated; the spectacle of genitals and close proximity to them thus challenged that obliteration, and forced people to acknowledge what they had factually obliterated, refuted and rejected. Statements such as “Intimate areas of friends being displayed” (Anonymous, 2013, *Undressing Truth Questionnaire 6, Appendix B*) clearly prove that Foucault’s notions of Victorianism are still lingering and thriving in today’s society. (4)

Researching such reactions to nudity also exposed a number of questions regarding the after effect of the performance on the performers and audience. Many audience members have commented to say they are unsure how to view the performers now that they have seen the most intimate parts of them. The performance showed that the audience were far more concerned with the presence of a stranger than that of

someone they knew. This suggests that the audience attached a certain amount of intimacy to the task which made it hard to complete as it is unusual to be intimate with a stranger. It also reiterates the argument discussed earlier regarding nudity as a sexual image. As audience members it was not the intention of creating a sexual tension, but by being naked in close proximity it allowed for the other audience members to attach a level of intimacy to the task, inviting themselves into their personal space. For ethical reasons it was not possible to push this further but it would have been interesting to test at what level British people become vocal about discomfort.

But, what if there were no ethical constructs regarding the use of nudity meaning that you did not have to pre warn the audience of the performances' content? It would be interesting to see if the audience was pleasantly surprised or outraged. By not having the announcement of nudity it would be possible to gauge a true audience reaction. Another example to test the limits of ethical constructs; the naked latecomer would sit on the audience member's lap or the arm of their chair forcing further interaction and singling out that individual creating a social stigma against them.

Analysis of the Practice as Research

As this thesis is designed to 'test' current trends and biases in performance making, it was felt necessary to construct a performance that strove to highlight both the questions and the tenets of the proposed research. The rationale that informs this thesis, therefore, does not call for a standard dissertation format, as the investigation is linked to the specifically devised performance.

The suggestion that British audiences are pre-disposed to be shocked by nudity in theatre due to the socially enforced lingering of Victorian morals was thus explored by creating both a stage event that centered on nudity and shock values, and a systematic analysis of the audience's perception and reception of the same. The performance, entitled, *Undressing Truth* (2013) played a twofold key role in the project.

The staged event created three different positions for the audience, the first being them as a spectator and conventional audience member, this is explained as a viewer of the performance in front of them. The second being part of the performance, the audience became performers within the performance. Finally the third which was audience as a research topic, this is explained as their reactions within the performance aspect later become the research tool for the case study analysis and conclusion. The first aspect was created by designing the performance on stage, this kept the barrier between the performers and audience. This allowed for the audience to be lulled into a false sense of security. This was then disrupted by the second position which forced the audience to become part of the performance,

this broke tradition and expectation and created a tense atmosphere making them more susceptible to shock. Without these moments it would have been difficult to create shock or other reactions because without these moments the performance would be a regular occurrence, the expected. By changing the format throughout the performance the audience and performers created a state of flux, the audience did not know what would happen next and the performers could not predict the responses.

The staged event was a three-tier construct. The first tier consisted of the projection of photographic images. The projected images portrayed varying degrees of nudity presented in a non-sexual stimulating manner (as seen at 00.27.93, performance DVD). The positioning of the models and the lighting were devised in a way that resonated with the intentionally non-sexual image entitled '*Still not asking for it*' (unknown, 2013) Found on the STFUconservatives page. This image depicts a woman standing topless with the words 'still not asking for it' written across her torso – a political statement that refers to sexual abuse and highlighting the fact that the naked body is viewed as an invitation for sexual conduct. This theory is in line with Alison, M Jaggar's view that "the female nude is reduced to a sexual object; [...] nude women represented, or purportedly represented, [...] are represented-as-sexual objects." (1989. P72). The images used within the performance were designed to contradict this theory. The imagery used within *Undressing Truth* (2013) was a series of colour and black and white images that were flashed up onto a white screen at the back of the stage. These images depicted genitalia at close range and full body shots (Appendix A, image 2, 6, 7, 8), with the intention to shock using body position and the close proximity of the images (see appendix A).

The positions created by the models were not stereotypical angles or positions for their gender. The squatting woman is a prime example of this, her image caused a stir within the audience as it was an unexpected position that is not expected of a woman. By using these positions the director was able to create shock by the unexpected nature of them.

The projection of these images onto the back of the stage offered the audience the opportunity to distance themselves from the nudity and act as a spectator, giving them the comfort of a traditional performance in which they are the viewers and able to make judgments based upon sound reasoning. Many of the audience members found some of the images disturbing because of the range of model positioning, camera angles and image framing techniques employed by the director – as highlighted by one viewer's comment, according to which "the bluntness of the images from the outset" (Anonymous (2013) *Undressing Truth Questionnaire 1 appendix B*) caused the patron some element of shock. The positions of the subjects in the photographs were used to highlight different aspects and views of the naked body in all forms. "The private parts of people being photographed. Was kind of hard to just look at them, even though you had to" (Anonymous (2013) *Undressing Truth Questionnaire 2 appendix B*)

The second tier of *Undressing Truth* (2013) (05.53.10, Performance DVD) was a dance element intended to address issues regarding body image and nudity, an attempt to show the evolution of the body construct within society and how this impacts our views on nudity. The dance element gave the audience the separation expected from a traditional theatre experience and also gave them the opportunity for escapism, using the dance as a focal point for the audience to transfer their attention to when the third tier of the performance started; the dance component of

the performance also highlighted the ease with which we accept nudity (20.00.00, Performance DVD) in dance opposed to theatre creating a mechanism to test this theory. This tier consisted of a series of movements that showcased the body and its reactions to size, weight and placement. There was a set of scales for each of the dancers and this became a stimulus for them to create movement, because it allowed them to use the prop to influence movement and create a story entwined with their movement. The choreography was split into three sections which mirrored the three tiers of the performance. The first one could be referred to as 'the weight section' using society's views on body image and weight to impact their movements, creating an unconscious pressure onto the choreography; this increased the tempo of the movement and the music (07.18.20, Performance DVD). This movement was open to interpretation; as such it gave the audience the opportunity to formulate a perception of what they were seeing currently and what was about to come with the introduction of shock values. The music for this section played a large part in setting such an atmosphere and helped to create a state of tension so that when the crescendo happened within the music, using tension building and a loud explosion, which combined with the rapid movement and the throwing of the scales gave the audience the opportunity to feel the true impact of what they were seeing and feeling (13.10.30, performance DVD). The second section of the dance was silence (13.15.00 – 14.10.00, performance DVD), a freeze frame that simulated the end of a performance; this was held for longer than considered natural, heightening the state of tension within the auditorium. The third section of the dance (14.15.00, Performance DVD) was a slower much more relaxed episode, using slower movements and calm even tempo music. This contrasted with what was happening in the audience. The dancers used nudity (18.43.00, performance DVD), although it

did not seem to have the same effect as the nudity used within the audience. This will be discussed further during the findings.

The third tier (14.15.00, performance DVD) was the main objective of the performance, incorporating the real essence of the research, the part that was intended to shock and disturb the audience the most. The idea was to intrude on and intentionally violate the audience's personal space with close exposure to nudity, namely nudity with which they could not help interact. This has been influenced by the work of St. Pierre whose work with nudity helped inspire the idea for the performance.

In order to break down and intentionally challenge some of the traditional theatre conventions such as punctuality and compliance, four latecomers arrived during the first tier (07.00.00, performance DVD). Once the latecomers were settled in their seats they waited for a cue from the dance performers. The latecomers' sign came from a climax in the choreographic tension created on stage. This was created using sound that enhanced the choreographic devices such as adapting the sound levels to suit to movement produced on stage, and allowing the movement to be influenced by the sounds used within the music. The aim of this choreographic tension and crescendo was to create an unnecessary stop in the flow of narrative. This action created a silence within the auditorium which could be linked to the audience's reaction to the unexpected narrative on stage. The prompt for the latecomers to get ready to begin their movement was one of the dancers throwing their scales at the wall, and then deafening silence (13.15.00, performance DVD). Once the music began again those that were late began to remove items of their clothing and pass them around the audience (14.40.00, performance DVD), this made the audience

aware of the performers intention. Once they were entirely naked they sat down to watch the performance (17.48.00, performance DVD), allowing the audience a chance to re-evaluate their surroundings and feelings. After a few minutes the naked performers stood and began walking up and down their rows asking the audience members to remove the envelope that had been stuck under their chair earlier (19.20.00, performance DVD). Inside the envelope was a sticker with a body part written upon it. The audience members were then asked by the performers to stick the found labels to the corresponding body parts. Once they had stuck all the labels on the correct parts, they then took their seats again to watch the dancers who by this point had also removed some of their clothing. Upon hearing another cue the latecomers began to move toward the stage (25.20.00, Performance DVD) where they joined the dancers in a line with their backs facing the audience (26.00.00, performance DVD), after a minute they then turned to face the audience (26.23.00, performance DVD), the music died and the performers continued to stand in silence until the curtains closed a few minutes later (27.00.00, performance DVD). The performance was designed as thus in order to create tension and unexpected moments. The idea was to break down the barriers between the audience and the performers by using traditional theatre moments combined with unexpected techniques.

The audience was then asked to fill in a short questionnaire, which had been designed in line with Kershaw's explorations of the use of questionnaires as documentation. This was in order to gather data for the argument; they were also invited to stay and ask any further questions directly to the director and performers. This gave valuable insight to the director and also the research, as many points were

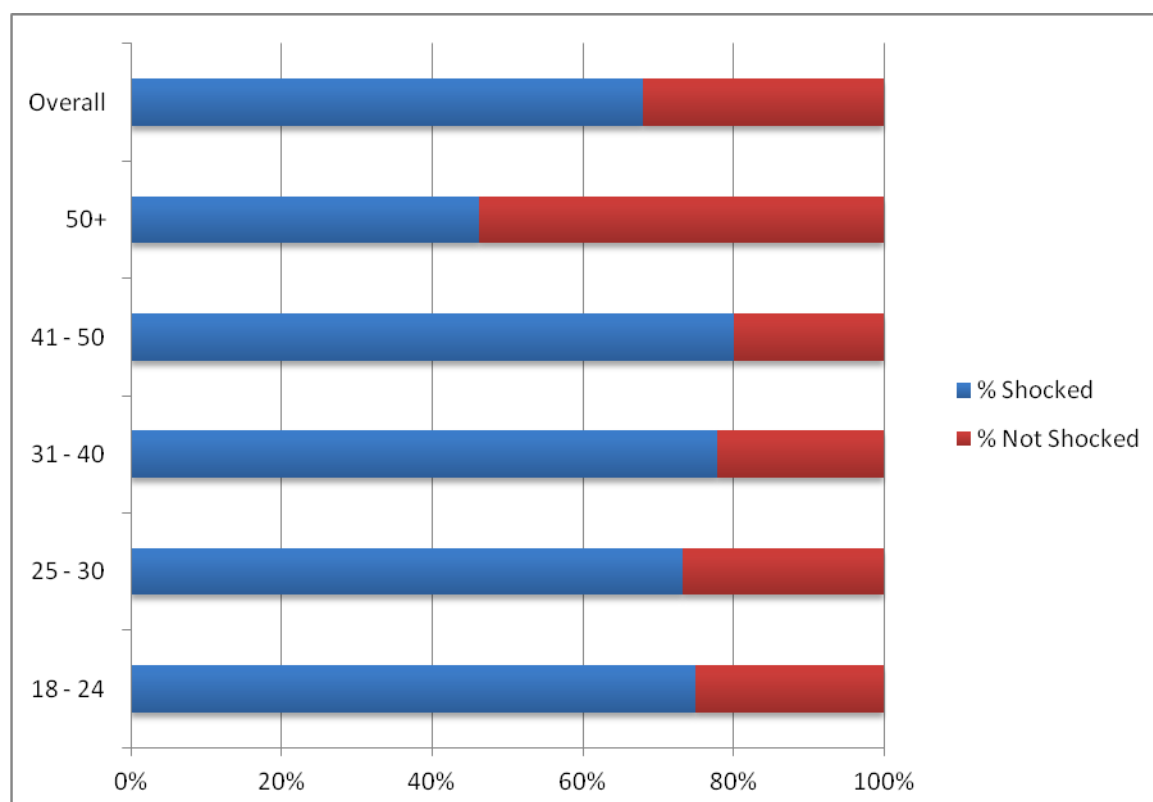
raised during the after show discussion that the research had not necessarily considered as a reaction.

The performance was a one off event. Its findings can only be viewed as a unique experience; by this it is argued that the findings from the performance only represent this unique event. Therefore it would not be possible to suggest that this one performance could determine whether or not the audience would be shocked every time. That is to suggest that although the findings from the performance are relevant to the research, they cannot be used soundly as a single entity to define nationally shared trends or thoughts. Of course when looking at the study of sexuality it would not be possible to exclude the theories of Foucault and Freud and use these as a basis for theoretical grounding. The most relevant to this work are the theories of Foucault in his triptych *The History of Sexuality* (1990 -1992). Foucault's trilogy is a detailed exploration into historic complexes of sexuality; this relates to the current work as it gives a detailed historical overview relating the idea of sexuality and shock values back to the Victorian era. Foucault attempts to answer some difficult questions on the problematic nature of sexual morality and the historic aspects of sexuality. Perpendicular to the work of Foucault is the work of Freud and his theories discussed within *Totem and Taboo*. This book explores the ideas behind taboos and how they come to be a part of society. From engaging with Freud's studies it is now possible to apply these theories to the study of nudity and how and why this is still relevant in contemporary society.

Data analysis

The results have been formulated and placed into separate tables to show the data collected in a clear format, the results will be discussed below. The data for the findings has been collected from questionnaires that were distributed after the performance. If an audience member expressed a moment of shock then the data was placed for the argument, those that expressed no element of shock were placed against the argument.

Age Group	Shocked		Not Shocked		Total
	No.	%	No.	%	
18 - 24	6	75%	2	25%	8
25 - 30	11	73%	4	27%	15
31 - 40	7	78%	2	22%	9
41 - 50	4	80%	1	20%	5
50+	6	46%	7	54%	13
Total	34	68%	16	32%	50



The tables above show a range of data that suggests elements of the performance were considered shocking. But, as mentioned earlier the audience were unaware of the definition of shock, and judging by their responses to the question asking them to define shock many of them would not have experienced shock.

Each of these responses refers to an individual moment of shock that each patron felt at one point during the performance. Generally this was in relation to the close proximity of the performance and the graphic images at the start of the show. No audience member was apparently shocked by the dance aspect of the performance which supports the theory that nudity in dance is readily accepted.

When dealing with shock it is difficult to find a way to measure the response. It was therefore important to include the questionnaire as a means of data collection and a measurement of the audience's responses. Kershaw suggests that it is not possible to gain an accurate response from an audience when presenting the data collection

forms at the end of the performance. He argues that this allows the audience a chance to forget crucial moments within the performance or interpret them differently after a conversation with a peer. For this performance it was imperative that the audience be given the data collection forms at the end of the performance as if they were given them prior to the performance they would have been looking for the answers within the piece. It was important that the audience were able to focus on what was happening with no prior warning to the shock elements of the performance. If the audience had been given the questionnaires at the beginning of the performance they would have known that the intended outcome was one of shock. This would have informed the audiences' judgment on the performance and invalidated the responses. For example; the audience responses could have detailed their response in light of the intended outcomes and produced incorrect data that did not represent their true feelings. By distributing the questionnaires after, we allowed the responses to be as accurate as possible allowing for the possibility of peer intervention.

Those that did attend the performance were given a warning about the context of the piece, that it contained nudity. The invitation also explained that the performance was not suitable for those under 18; this instantly suggests a risqué factor by excluding an age range. The invitation also stated that the performance was not suitable for those of a nervous disposition, implying that the performance contained imagery that was not suitable for those who are easily offended. By doing this it created an expectation of nudity and therefore the audience are less likely to be shocked when presented with nudity. However, as discussed earlier if we were able to re-create this performance or one similar it would benefit the research not to disclose the true nature of the performance. This would offer more accurate results

and give grounding to the argument. The audience members were invited to the performance; this implies that they had some prior connection with the director or performer. If we could re-create this performance and open it to the general public we would gather different results. This would open the performance to different ethnicities, cultures and religions, each of which would have varying ideas of shock values and morality. As it was the audience consisted of theatre goers who were generally open minded about what they were viewing.

The most surprising figure is that of the 50+ group who were least shocked. One would have assumed that the over 50's would be the most likely to be shocked due to their age and backgrounds, i.e. the older the patron the more likely they are to support the Victorian morals and ethics. As the table shows though only 46% of the over 50's were shocked. This could be due to many things the first being that being of a certain age allows for a certain degree of ambivalence towards peer pressure, the older generations are no longer defined by their actions. The second could be that the over 50's are from the 'hair generation' as discussed above. This was a generation that experimented with sexuality and what it meant; they were given sexual freedom that did not define them to a certain sexuality. Foucault argues that there was an element of rebellion and ultimately that is what sexuality is defined as, the revolution of the definition. The table also shows that the most shocked age group were the 40-50's. It is strange that 10 years makes such a difference. This data suggests that we have regressed coming full circle, starting from the Victorian period to now. It seems there was a dip in shock susceptibility through those born during the 60's and 70's. By this it can be argued that if there were a larger test subject for the performance it could be seen that there is a larger dip within shock susceptibility for those born during or near the sexual revolution, and that since the

sexual revolution we have been trying to regain the composure expected of Britain. It is clear that there is a trend in those more susceptible to shock being born at the later scale such as those born in the 80's and 90's. However, it is difficult to say conclusively if this is the case. With more people in attendance it could have been divided more categorically into age groups with clear definitions. In hindsight the questionnaire should have asked for ethnicity and religion in order to create a demographic analysis.

Before conducting the research a hypothesis was created that the older generations would find the naked body more shocking. There are some anomalies with this which can be explained using the sexual revolution and its impact upon a whole generation. The questionnaires show a wide disparity between age ranges and their views on nudity. This suggests that the idea of nudity as a shocking entity cannot be directly linked to a specific age group as it would appear that there is no link between age and whether or not you find nudity offensive. One of the patrons that were invited to the performance declined due to their own moral belief on nudity and how it should be portrayed, she wrote a letter to explain her reasoning behind her feelings. The response gathered from her was a much more believable response and fits with the hypothesis that an older generation does find the idea of nudity in theatre more offensive. Her reasons were clear; the thought of being in a room with nude performers would make her feel uncomfortable. She goes on to suggest that every generation will have people that feel like her, this is something that the hypothesis had not considered, that this could be something other than generational, that it was possibly something that was passed through generations. During the course of her thinking about her reaction to nudity in theatre she directed a question to her 18 year old grandson. She asked him how he would feel had he been invited to see such a

performance he said he would not mind the nudity as long as the performers were attractive and female. She also went on to suggest that men find it easier to adapt to the concept than women do. This is an interesting statement as it would suggest that women are more conservative than men. This is not yet proven, but is possibly something that could be further explored. For example when sourcing the performers for the performance it was much harder to recruit male performers than female. The males needed constant reassurance regarding their image and how it was perceived. This would suggest that men do not find it easier to adapt to the concept than women.

The test subjects from this performance came from one cultural background. They were all white British and although the data does not show this as a question asked within the questionnaire for ethical reasons, it has been observed as an issue regarding the data collected. By limiting the invitations to these people we have inadvertently missed collecting data from other cultures which could have posed many other questions regarding the use of nudity within theatre.

Conclusion

“A truly artistic show will always be unique, impossible to be repeated: never will the same actors, in the same play, produce the same show.”

(Boal, A. cited in Schechner, R. 2006 p. introduction)

This performance contained a set of strict variables, the audience, the space and the content. If any of these were altered or even as the quote suggests performed again there would be no guarantee that the same outcomes would be achieved. Therefore it is highly unlikely that by creating a different scenario it would be possible to create the same outcomes. Still, in line with established research approaches that recommend speculating on diverse, possible outcomes (Kershaw, B. and Nicholson, H., 2011), it could be affirmed that two other possible scenarios could generate similar outcomes. The first entails placing the performance in an unconventional space, by using the same performance in a different space it would be possible to test that singular variable. It would be interesting to try and use implied nudity to create the same outcomes. Implied nudity is where the body is orchestrated into a position that implies they are naked when in fact they are not. In order to do this it would mean taking new images of models in positions that imply nudity. Inspiration for this could come from the work of Lea Anderson and the Featherstonehaughs in the lost dances of *Egon Schiele* (1998). The imagery for this performance is inspired by a number of portraits of nude bodies which have been translated into movement. Within this performance the dancers move in body suits that are painted to accent body parts, this implies nudity without the ethical issues of live nudity. This idea of creating implied nudity is something that could create the same outcome if used correctly. If the models were placed in body suits there would be no ethical issues as

it would not be actual nudity just implied, although if the audience were un-aware of the implication of nudity it could be argued that it would still pose an ethical issue. If the event were to be performed in an unconventional space it would still meet the expectation for the aim, which is to create the unexpected as the space will be an unexpected variable. If the audience were to stay the same then it could be argued that a similar response could be expected to the unanticipated variable. Should the audience be changed or altered, as in opened to the general public or hand selected from a different pool of people, then the argument suggests that they will have different opinions to the original audience and therefore the results will not be the same. If the same audience were to watch a similar production one would assume they would not have the same reactions, as they would expect a similar performance, which would take away the possible outcome of shock.

The second idea is to place a similar performance again in an unconventional space but to make the audience see the performance how they want to. There are many ways in which this can be accomplished. One way could be to create the performance in the form of a maze installation, with viewing areas that are hidden; along the walls will be images of a similar nature to the original performance. Within the viewing areas would be smaller versions of the performance, for example one of them could be a small extract of the dance performed in the original performance, Another could be an archway of naked people that the audience have to walk through, similar to the work of Abramović and Ulay *Imponderabilia* (1977). These ideas create a similar environment which, in theory, should create a similar outcome. With these alternative ideas it would also be interesting not to give the audience prior warning as to the content of the performance. This would then highlight the argument raised within *Undressing Truth* (2013) regarding the findings and the audience's

perceived expectation of nudity. In theory both of these performances should create outcomes that match the staged performance, but it cannot be said for certain as there are many variables combined within the original performance. When all of these variables are combined they create the expected outcomes. If one of these variables differs to the original then a reasonable argument would be that it would alter the outcomes and create a different performance. For example if the audience had not been invited, if the performance had been opened to the general public and a cost incurred to attend, would the outcome have been the same? No it would not. The feedback from the audience stated that some of them would not pay to see something like this as it is not their idea of theatre. This suggests that there would only be audience members that were comfortable with nudity in theatre and therefore would not be shocked by nudity on stage. However, it does not guarantee that the audience would be comfortable with nudity in close proximity or being asked to involve themselves with the performance.

The 'what if' scenarios reveal that the audience's perception of the performance is key to shock value, and that these variables determine the levels one could expect from the audience. For example; Foucault, explains that the history of sexuality is a social construct designed in that specific space and time. These social constructs are designed as a tool for controlling those societies' views on sexuality. This construct decided what acceptable discourse is and what is considered extreme. During the course of his trilogy Foucault looks at the developments of sexuality from the 19th century to present. Even though these theories were current almost three decades ago they can still be considered contemporary. This argues alone that as a society we have not moved forward with regards to our values placed upon sexuality and the things that are considered sexual, for example nudity.

It could also be argued that the performance should have tested for other reactions instead of solely focusing on shock, from the video footage it is possible to see a number of other reactions, these range from discomfort to embarrassment. The moment, where, as a viewer it is possible to distinguish discomfort within the audience, is when the latecomers' arrive and a gentleman in the audience stands up to let them through. This is to avoid personal contact, which the audience member feels discomfort from. (7:10.00. Performance DVD) the moment in which embarrassment arises is when the audience member laughs loudly and then precedes to look around the room for justification, she does not receive it and therefore feels embarrassment regarding her reaction. (17:50.00. Performance DVD) This is something that was not tested within the practice as research, in hindsight this would have been a more telling experiment if all emotions had been discussed as part of the discussion or within the questionnaire. By looking closer at different reactions from the audience it would be possible to explore the various results relating to the audiences reaction to nudity in theatre.

Society is made up of micro societies that dictate what you should wear, say, do and how you should respond to certain situations. That when faced with a real scenario such as placing a sticker onto a naked breast or penis the person does not know how to respond. In turn, all that, results in a multitude of scenarios, ranging from the nervous laughter which breaks the tension that had been slowly building, to the more than detectable increase in the audience's discomfort (15.33.00. Performance DVD). Obviously, there is also the silence, the staring at the ceiling to avoid eye contact - behavioural patterns that, within different sociological contexts, would be associated with disabilities like Asperger's or Autism.

The relationship between the British and sex is one that has been ridiculed in comedies such as *No Sex Please we're British* (Foot, A & Marriott, A 1971) and by comedians such as Benny Hill *The Handyman* (1986). Interestingly, each created comedy by using sexist clichés and risqué stereotypes, but feared real intimacy. As mentioned throughout the thesis, such comedic examples incarnate the long standing legacy of Victorian morals.

Sexual politics in the UK have framed the way in which we view many arguments and debates, for example Foucault's work regarding sexuality and social control. His claim that sexuality as a word was not in use until the late 19th century shows that the Victorians were structuring sexuality or the idea of sexuality to suit their own social needs. Their desire to discuss such topics invented the need for words to describe what they were discussing without being graphic or indecent. The relation to sex and power is heightened in Foucault's argument.

As it has been argued by Kershaw (2011), performance as research may not be the ideal or the only way forward. The proposed argument only came to light through a critical analysis of existing discourses and debates formulated outside the boundaries of practice based and practice as research. The creation of a performance aimed at addressing those discourse limits, inevitably, the research findings to that particular moment in time. As such they cannot be used as general parameters to illustrate the effects that the use of nudity, and the related shock generating factors have at national level.

Likewise, and constantly in line with Kershaw's thinking, findings cannot be considered factual, as this is dependent upon the varying and often discordant factors that inform methods used to gather and store data. The use of the

questionnaire, therefore, does not grant reliability of information, for it does not record ways in which audience members might have modified their initial responses through discussion with one another, and revisited their original thoughts in line with social tenets and constructs. Similarly, the questionnaire might also suffer from chronological factors, as it is more than possible that by the time viewers were filling it in, they had forgotten salient moments. Finally, viewers might forgo information that they intended to use within the questionnaire.

Still, even with those caveats, the questionnaire proved a useful tool as it did reveal that audience members shared views and, most significantly, did consider shocking some specific moments in the performance.

The reactions of the audience are interesting as they cover a wide spectrum. The audience seemed interested in the amount of preparation it took to perform nude. The audience feedback highlighted body shape and image as a factor which dictated whether or not they enjoyed the performance. The reaction to the initial nudity within the audience was mixed, some were stunned to silence and some were more responsive, one person laughed through nerves and this resulted in an alteration of the atmosphere. The audience suggested that the laughter lightened the mood, and the performers found the laughter distracting. This highlights the differences between the perceptions of performer and spectator.

It was suggested that the labels when introduced in the performance neutralised the body showing that everyone was equal; this separated the image of the naked body from perception of nudity. One example of this is; the fact that you know or recognise the naked performer and have to acknowledge the fact that they have sexuality or areas not discussed in public. By sticking the label onto the areas of the body it

distracts from the fact that this is a person you know. This highlights Foucault's theory on the willingness to accept the intrinsic nature of the human being and all the factors that make them up including sex and nudity. By presenting the body in a de-sexualised manner it gave the audience the opportunity to detract the sexual components from the person they know. This created the ability to continue in normal society.

The findings taken from the performer's perspective highlight key issues within the research. For instance the other female audience performer had no issues being naked in public but did have issues with intimate nudity which is an interesting concept within itself. The two female dancers each had the same body issues and decided together that they would only display their breasts bare. When confronted with the initial stimulus being the performances of De Frutos' *Grass* (2011) and *Un Peu De Tendress Bordel Merde!* (2011) their responses were very similar. They believed *Grass* (2011) represented ritualistic tendencies and that St Pierre used an invasion of personal space in order to shock and disturb the audience. When explained that the idea was to shock the audience they began to discuss the ways in which we could achieve this result. Many of the performers interpreted their own ideas on how to create the images intended to shock. What was most surprising during the rehearsal process was watching the development of each performer's style of removing clothing and interacting with the audience. The more they rehearsed the more comfortable they became in the space. This became a safe haven even though what they were doing was considered an unsafe action, one that could potentially open them to ridicule and become ostracised. The male performers seemed to struggle with the imagery the most; they seemed most concerned with the audience reaction or perception. This became something during rehearsals that they

needed reassurance upon. By reminding them of the ethical boundaries in place and the attention to consent and written representation of the ethics resulted in a much more relaxed environment. “After you had assured me of the steps you had taken to protect the performers I began to relax” (Jackson, M. 2013 *Appendix C*)

Although the findings suggest that the audience were shocked overall by the performance this cannot be counted on as accurate data, due to the nature of the performance and from what we have argued earlier regarding the use of a performance as part of the research. The nature of the performance dictated that at least one member of the audience would regard some aspects as a shocking representation of theatre. The outcomes prove that the variations in the presentation enhanced the levels of shock displayed in the audience.

The limitations of using Foucault and Freud to construct the argument are that although their theories fit with the current argument they do not speak for the current generation. It speaks volumes within itself that their theories can be applied to today's societies even though Foucault's theories are three decades old and Freud's work within totem and taboo was published in 1913, exactly 100 years ago. There is a gap of 60 years between their works and yet they both apply to society and the core argument running through the thesis. The two should not be considered as one though as although Foucault references Freud it is more as a source of the time in order to understand the theories of the time. Freud was writing at the height of the Victorian era, at the time he was a contemporary theorist addressing the issues presented within his society. What is strange is that we can still apply his theories to the current generation and the social stigma attached to nudity. Foucault was writing at the height of the sexual revolution and again his theories are still relevant to this argument. This clearly suggests a stalemate with regards to a 'sexual revolution'. It

would appear that this 'revolution' was only apparent in certain micro societies such as the bourgeois societies that exist in all western cultures. This ties in with what both Foucault and the audience member who wrote the letter suggest. The suggestion is that in every society the history will change, adapt to suit the needs to the current population. In every society there will be a group or individual that will rebel against the proposed change or revolution, this then causes the history to be re written.

The alternative scenarios, mentioned earlier, seem to suggest that another performance would be possible, but would not necessarily procure the same outcomes. There are too many variables which when altered will inevitably change the makeup of the performance, like removing a protein from a strand of DNA will alter the genetic makeup of a human being. If it were possible to expand the performance to enhance the research, it would mean creating multiple performances that take into consideration the area and performance space used. It would be interesting to compare the results with other countries. For example; one could assume that countries such as Europe, America or Australia would have different ethics, morals and cultures that stipulate different rules regarding the use of nudity in theatre or dance. To that extent it could be argued that different areas of Europe would differ dramatically too. For example; it could be argued based on previous research that Sweden has a greater tolerance to nudity than some of Europe; this can be seen in their tolerance of pornography and general attitude to the body. In order to further this research this is an important question to follow. It would also be interesting to apply these theories to countries that were once under British rule during the Victorian era such as India or Africa which could be argued have similar morals and ethics as contemporary Britain. If this assumption was the case then it

would highlight the running argument that the Victorians have influenced contemporary society by way of cementing their morals and ethics regarding nudity or sexuality.

The Performance

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Appendices

**Appendix A - Images from the first tier – Photography by
Victoria Fielding (2013)**

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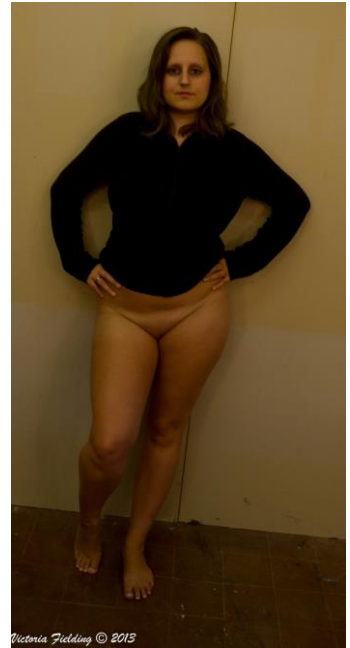
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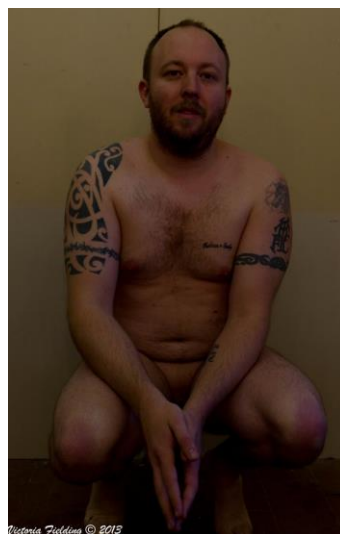
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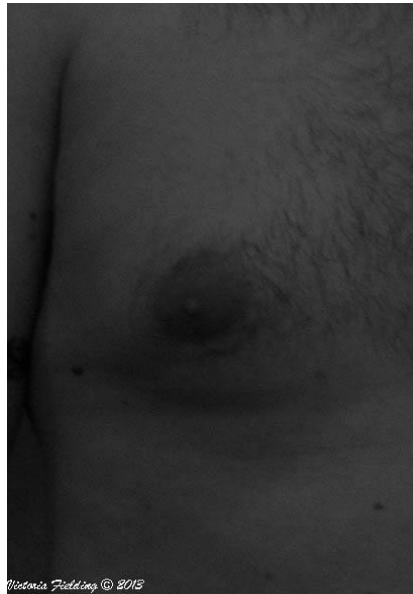
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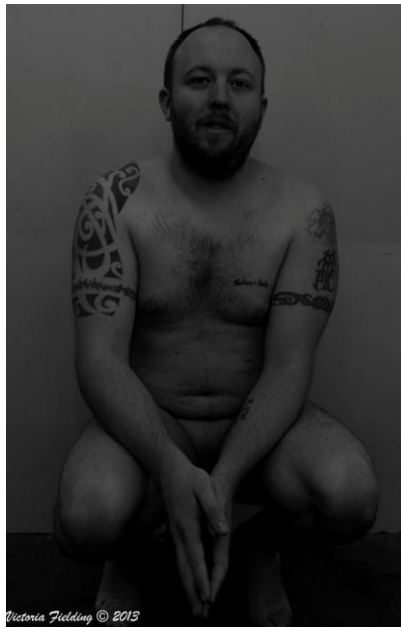
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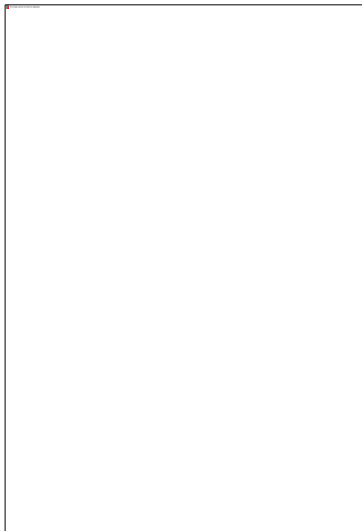
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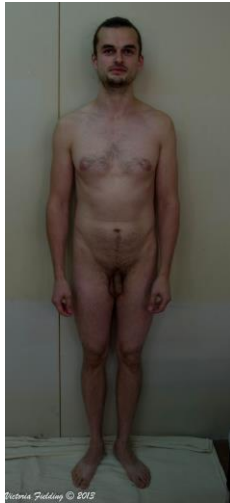
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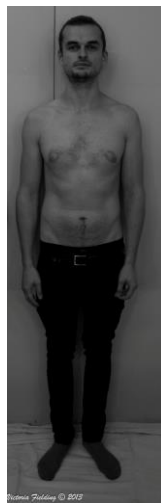
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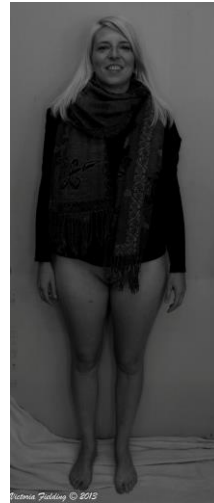
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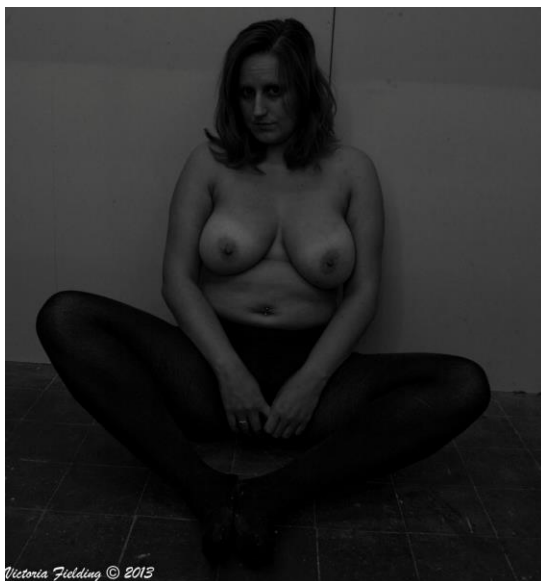
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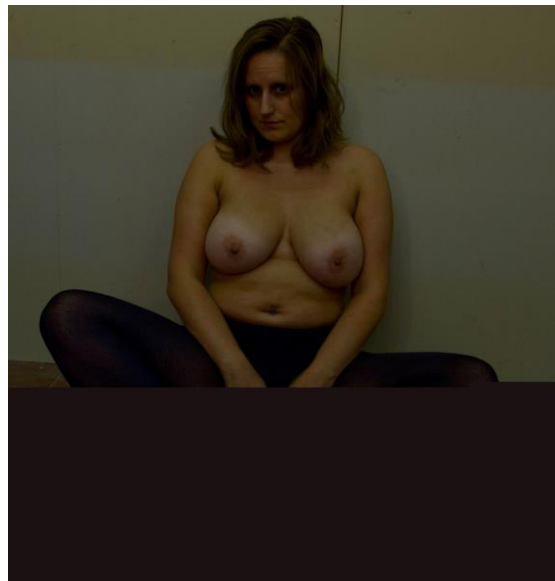
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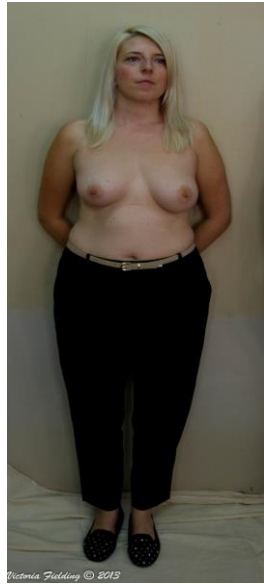
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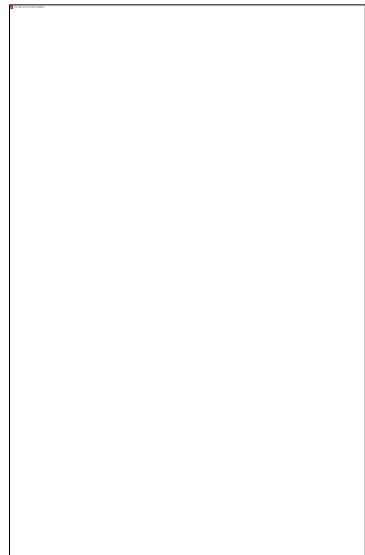
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APPENDIX B – SELECTION OF QUESTIONNAIRES

Questionnaire 1

Thank you for taking the time to answer these questions based on the performance you have just seen.

Firstly could you confirm which age range you fall into by circling the appropriate group?

18 - 25

25 - 30

30 - 40

40 - 50

50+

Questions

1. What is your definition of shock?

The mind's Response
to an event be it visual or physical.
uncontrolled by the conscious mind.

2. Which was the most shocking image within the event and what brought you to this conclusion?

When the gentleman next to me began to
undress handing his clothing out.

3. What particular areas of the images were most shocking to you as an audience member?

The bluntness of the images from the
out set.

4. At any point did you feel uncomfortable within the performance and how did you overcome this?

Only at the point where other's were visibly
in shock by what was happening and its initial
effect to the mood of the Audience as the
mood lifted the arrangement of the performance
changed and calmed.

Questionnaire 2

Thank you for taking the time to answer these questions based on the performance you have just seen.

Firstly could you confirm which age range you fall into by circling the appropriate group?

18 - 25

25 - 30

30 - 40

40 - 50

50+

Questions

1. What is your definition of shock?

THE ELEMENT OF SURPRISE, WITHOUT THE KNOWING OF WHAT WILL HAPPEN.

2. Which was the most shocking image within the event and what brought you to this conclusion?

WHEN PEOPLE AROUND ME STARTED TO GET UNDRESSED THAT WAS RATHER ODD. ALSO THE PERFORMANCE ON STAGE, JUST THE THOUGHT OF HAVING EVERYONE LOOKING, TO ME WOULD BE SHOCKING.

3. What particular areas of the images were most shocking to you as an audience member?

I WOULD SAY THE PRIVATES OF THE PEOPLE BEING PHOTOGRAPHED. WAS KINDA HARD TO JUST LOOK AT THEM. EVEN THOUGH YOU HAD TO.

4. At any point did you feel uncomfortable within the performance and how did you overcome this?

NO, NOT REALLY, A POINT WHEN THE AUDIENCE PERFORMERS WERE WALKING PAST BUT THAT WAS IT REALLY.

Questionnaire 3

Thank you for taking the time to answer these questions based on the performance you have just seen.

Firstly could you confirm which age range you fall into by circling the appropriate group?

18 - 25

25 - 30

30 - 40

40 - 50

50+

Questions

1. What is your definition of shock?

Something that takes one by surprise, perhaps in an unpleasant way, or a disturbing one.

2. Which was the most shocking image within the event and what brought you to this conclusion?

'Audience members' shipping and circulating.

It was largely unexpected and at close proximity, involving direct verbal and physical interaction.

3. What particular areas of the images were most shocking to you as an audience member?

~~the~~ Being presented with a stranger, or partially familiar person, naked, in an unusual and uncomfortable context.

4. At any point did you feel uncomfortable within the performance and how did you overcome this?

Not really - except perhaps during the initial slideshow, which seemed to extend for an uncomfortably long time, and when the initial dance ended and the performers were static.

(Audience unsure how to react, given the absence of conventional performance structure.)

Questionnaire 4

Thank you for taking the time to answer these questions based on the performance you have just seen.

Firstly could you confirm which age range you fall into by circling the appropriate group?

18 - 25

25 - 30

30 - 40

40 - 50

50+

Questions

1. What is your definition of shock?

~~Something~~ A moment that changes my breathing and makes me lost for words and thoughts temporarily

2. Which was the most shocking image within the event and what brought you to this conclusion?

I don't ~~think~~ shocked because I was prepped for nudity. It was odd seeing the images of men and women with clothes on their top halves & naked on bottom, reminds me of a child.

3. What particular areas of the images were most shocking to you as an audience member?

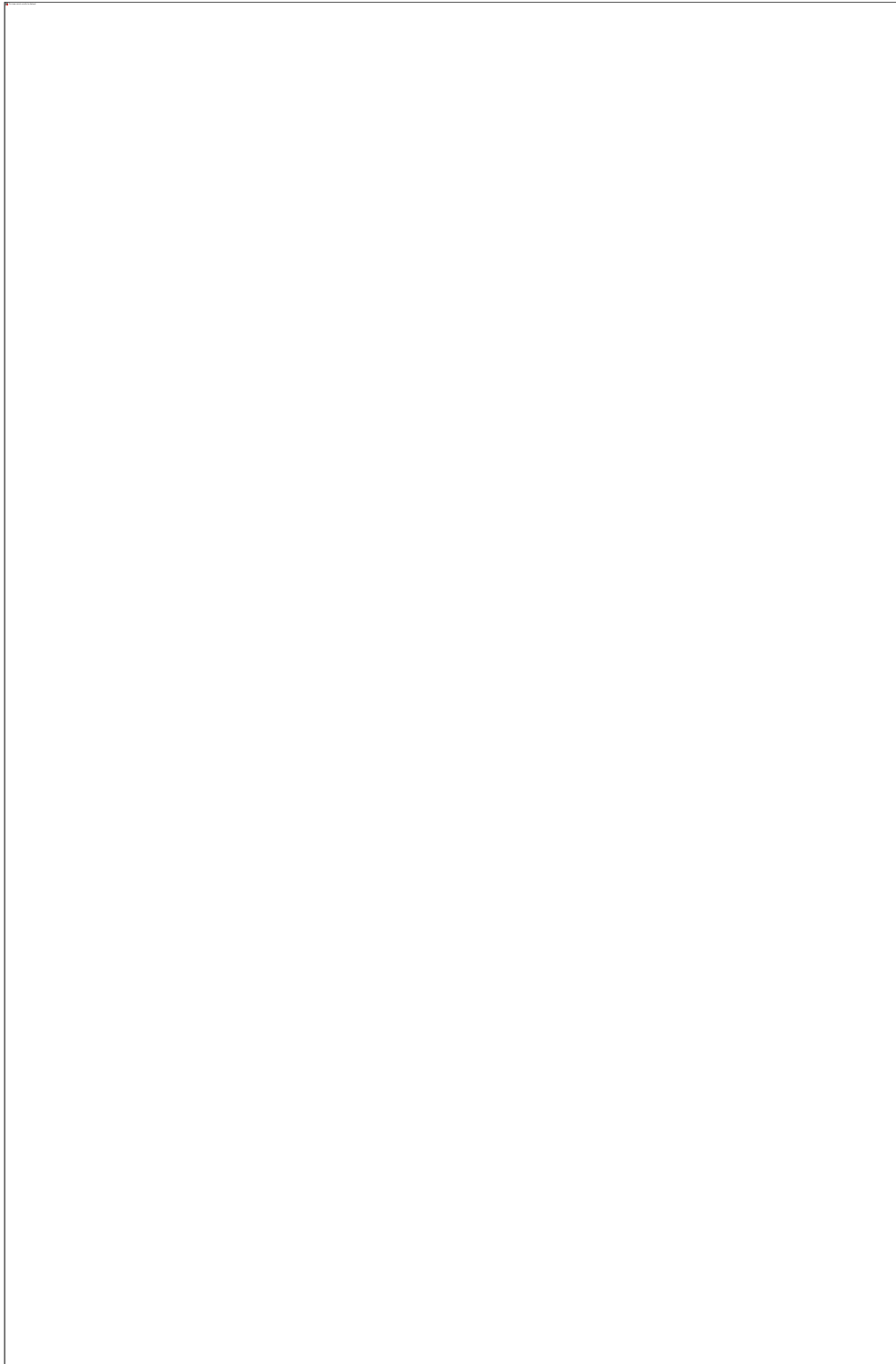
I don't know.

4. At any point did you feel uncomfortable within the performance and how did you overcome this?

I was a little uncomfortable when the performer first got naked, then didn't know where to look. I found the more I just stared at these bits the less uncomfortable I became by the end it seemed normal.

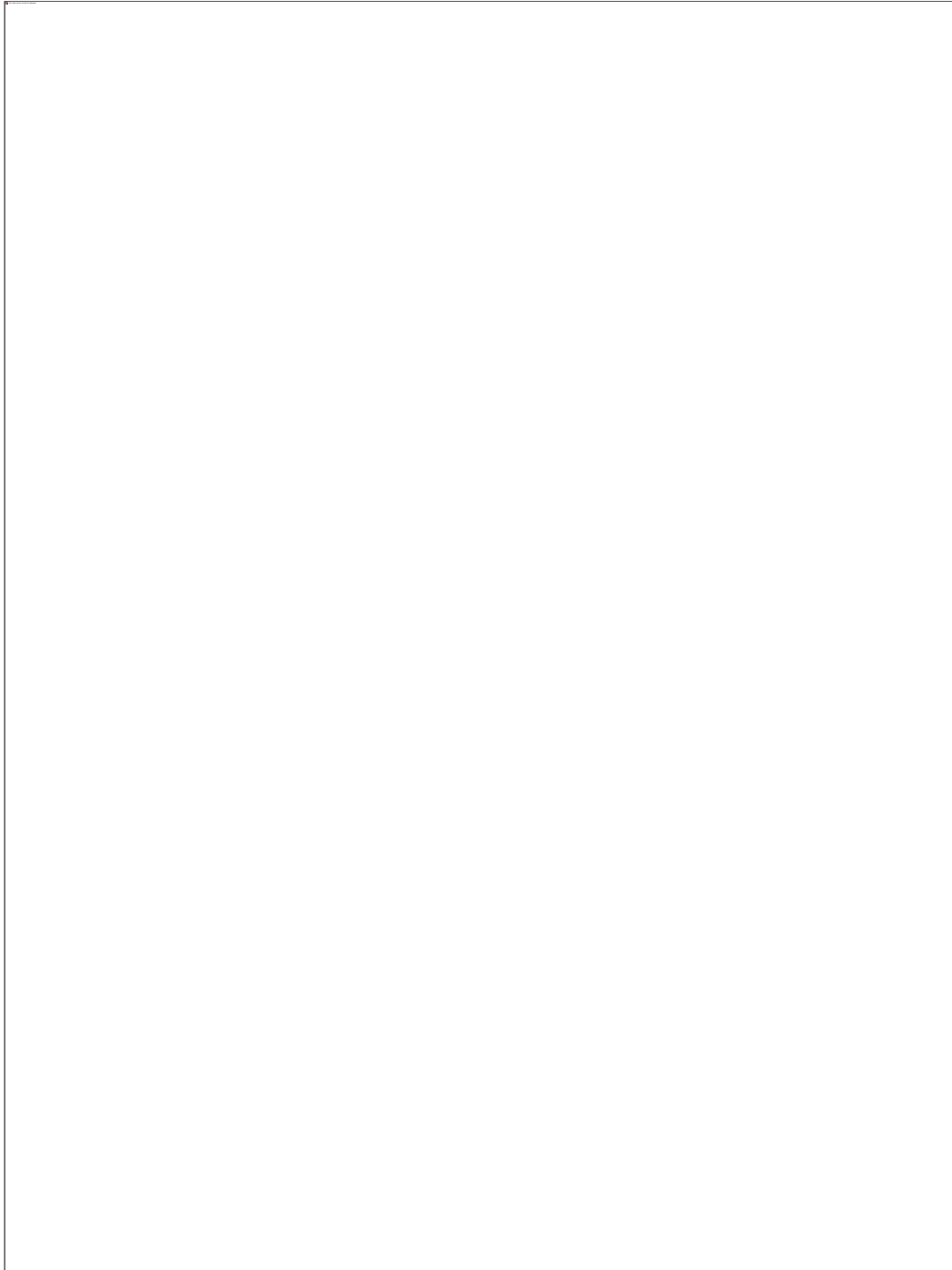
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Questionnaire 5

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the user to provide answers to the questionnaire questions.

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Questionnaire 6



Questionnaire 7

Thank you for taking the time to answer these questions based on the performance you have just seen.

Firstly could you confirm which age range you fall into by circling the appropriate group?

18 - 25

25 - 30

30 - 40

40 - 50

50+

Questions

1. What is your definition of shock?

A thing that gets the adrenalin pumping or something against the normal

2. Which was the most shocking image within the event and what brought you to this conclusion?

I was shocked at how different people's body shapes are because I am used to 'perfect' body types in magazines.

3. What particular areas of the images were most shocking to you as an audience member?

Willies! Especially the balls we don't get to see other peoples bits often!

4. At any point did you feel uncomfortable within the performance and how did you overcome this?

I didn't feel uncomfortable but I wanted to turn around and look behind but politeness prevented me.

Questionnaire 8

Thank you for taking the time to answer these questions based on the performance you have just seen.

Firstly could you confirm which age range you fall into by circling the appropriate group?

18 - 25

25 - 30

30 - 40

40 - 50

50+

Questions

1. What is your definition of shock?

2. Which was the most shocking image within the event and what brought you to this conclusion?

Shock might not be the right word, I felt tension and apprehension as empathy for those who were about to strip in front of an audience.

3. What particular areas of the images were most shocking to you as an audience member?

I also felt apprehension prior to the opening of the envelope - I didn't want it to be genital. Images of people I knew were more shocking than of strangers.

4. At any point did you feel uncomfortable within the performance and how did you overcome this?

During the intro/slide show + during the jinx I pre-contains how - I didn't pre-gone it the performance moved on and resolved the tension for me (to an extent!)

Questionnaire 9

Thank you for taking the time to answer these questions based on the performance you have just seen.

Firstly could you confirm which age range you fall into by circling the appropriate group?

18 - 25

25 - 30

30 - 40

40 - 50

50+

Questions

1. What is your definition of shock?

SOMETHING THAT MAKES YOU FEEL LIKE YOU'VE BEEN
PUNCHED IN THE STOMACH BECAUSE IT IS SO UNEXPECTED AND
SO AWFUL

2. Which was the most shocking image within the event and what brought you to this conclusion?

I THINK IT WAS WHEN ONE OF THE DANCERS THREW HER
WEIGHING SCALES TO STAGE RIGHT
IT CONVEYED THE ANGER ABOUT THE WHOLE "BODY IMAGE"
THING IN A STRONG WAY

3. What particular areas of the images were most shocking to you as an audience member?

I DIDN'T FEEL THERE WAS ANYTHING PARTICULARLY SHOCKING
- IN A WORLD OF TSUNAMIS TYPIKONS AND ETHNIC
CLEANSING THIS WAS RELATIVELY UN-SHOCKING
WHEN COMPARED TO WHAT GOES ON "OUT THERE"

4. At any point did you feel uncomfortable within the performance and how did you overcome this?

NO NOT REALLY (ALTHOUGH THE AUDIENCE AREA WAS
UNCOMFORTABLY HOT). MY OVERRIDING EMOTION WAS
ONE OF WANTING TO PROTECT THE ACTORS. WELL DONE
FOR TAKING IT ON.

Questionnaire 10

J5 + J6

Thank you for taking the time to answer these questions based on the performance you have just seen.

Firstly could you confirm which age range you fall into by circling the appropriate group?

18 - 25

25 - 30

30 - 40

40 - 50

50+

Questions

1. What is your definition of shock?

Something which takes your senses
by surprise

2. Which was the most shocking image within the event and what brought you to this conclusion?

The lady near the front that was naked
her breasts. Strange shape.

3. What particular areas of the images were most shocking to you as an audience member?

Male near rear his penis was
weird shape + stumpy

4. At any point did you feel uncomfortable within the performance and how did you overcome this?

was not uncomfortable.
liked the concept of the scales
+ weight issues.

Questionnaire 11

Thank you for taking the time to answer these questions based on the performance you have just seen.

Firstly could you confirm which age range you fall into by circling the appropriate group?

18 - 25

25 - 30

30 - 40

40 - 50

50+

Questions

1. What is your definition of shock?

When your body or brain shut down.

2. Which was the most shocking image within the event and what brought you to this conclusion?

How brave He cast where to be nude + free.

3. What particular areas of the images were most shocking to you as an audience member?

Seeing a old man's penis.

4. At any point did you feel uncomfortable within the performance and how did you overcome this?

When the lady was nude sitting next to me. I quickly realised we ~~are~~ all come in different shapes + sizes and it does not matter.

Questionnaire 12

Thank you for taking the time to answer these questions based on the performance you have just seen.

Firstly could you confirm which age range you fall into by circling the appropriate group?

18 - 25

25 - 30

30 - 40

40 - 50

50+

Questions

1. What is your definition of shock?

A sudden change that is unexpected.
Out of the norm. Quick reaction to a
situation. Body instinct.

2. Which was the most shocking image within the event and what brought you to this conclusion?

3. What particular areas of the images were most shocking to you as an audience member?

close up images

4. At any point did you feel uncomfortable within the performance and how did you overcome this?

Yes as it was all quiet. When people started
to undress in the audience 1st and laughter
knicked in, I felt more comfortable.

APPENDIX C – REHEARSAL LOG EXTRACT

Rehearsal Log Extract.

Rehearsal log.

Mick

what were your first impressions of the idea.

- Crazy idea /logistically not going to happen
- The level of thought into the performance and after you had assured me of the steps you had taken to protect the performers I began to relax.

what was your reaction to the work of Dave St Pierre work?

- Confused I was not sure what you were looking for.
- Quite ambitious had a complex ending and was well choreographed.